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20 April 2008

Jennifer Nielsen,
USGS/ Alaska Science Center
1011 East Tudor Rd
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Jennifer,

I give my full support to the nomination of Dr. David Fournier for the William E. Ricker Resource Conservation Award. This support stems from my firm belief that the extent and caliber of fisheries stock assessment research undertaken in the past 25 years has been enhanced significantly through the contributions made by Dr. Fournier. Since the landmark publication, Fournier & Archibald (1982), that provided the integrated approach for fisheries models and forms the basis of much of quantitative research on population dynamics and ecological modeling, fisheries stock assessments have become increasingly coherent and credible. Consequently, fisheries managers have been equipped with the valuable scientific support needed to make hard decisions for the conservation of pressured resources in the face of the increasing demands by fishing industry and sport fishers. Dr. Fournier's contribution to fisheries science has been of tremendous benefit for the better management and conservation of our natural resources.

I have been a fisheries scientist for 21 years and have undertaken fisheries stock assessments in New Zealand for 15 years. The publication, Fournier & Archibald (1982), was a fundamental component of my post-graduate studies in population modeling, and I have frequently made use of his work in my research. I have developed custom software that uses the principles developed by Dr. Fournier and more recently many of my analyses would either not be possible, or would require extensive additional effort on my part if it were not for Dr. Fournier's AD Model Builder software. This software enables biologists, such as myself, to readily apply formal Bayesian statistical techniques to population modeling problems. An outstanding example, is a risk analysis I recently completed for the highly endangered Hector's and Maui's dolphin endemic to New Zealand. The unique biological characteristics of this species (extremely low productivity) made parameter estimation extremely difficult, and would have been impossible without the sophisticated features offered in AD Model Builder software. Consequently, coherent Bayesian risk estimates were able to be provided to fisheries managers who are currently considering options to address the dire circumstances for one of the world's rarest dolphins. I am sure this is only one of many examples where Dr. Fournier's contributions to this field have benefitted our invaluable natural resources.

I have no hesitation in offering my full support to the nomination of Dr. Fournier for whom I feel tremendous personal gratitude for giving me the essential tools to make my own contribution towards renewable resource management.

Sincerely,

Nick Davies